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THAILAND-US: Bangkok policy review could eventually affect US bases. [redacted]

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THAILAND-US: BANGKOK'S CURRENT REVIEW OF POLICY TOWARD THE US COULD EVENTUALLY LEAD TO DECISIONS AFFECTING THE CONTINUED OPERATION OF SOME US FACILITIES IN THAILAND.

THE THAI AMBASSADOR TO THE US, WHO HAS BEEN CALLED HOME FOR CONSULTATIONS, RECENTLY TOLD A US OFFICIAL THAT PRESSURES ARE BUILDING FOR A CHANGE IN THAI FOREIGN POLICY. HE SAID THIS WAS DUE IN PART TO THE "MOOD" OF THE US CONGRESS, WHICH HAS RAISED DOUBTS ABOUT THE RELIABILITY OF US COMMITMENTS TO THAILAND.

MORE RECENTLY, ON 18 JULY, THAI DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER CHARTCHAI CALLED IN THE US DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION TO PASS ON A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON THREE MATTERS OF "HIGHEST IMPORTANCE":

- US INTENTIONS REGARDING CAMBODIA AFTER 15 AUGUST;
- US INTENTIONS REGARDING FUTURE USE OF THE AIR BASES IN THAILAND;
- US PLANS FOR EQUIPPING THE THAI ARMED FORCES.

IT IS CLEAR FROM CHARTCHAI'S REMARKS AND THOSE OF PRIME MINISTER THANOM THAT THE THAI WANT TO BEGIN EARLY NEGOTIATIONS TO REDUCE THE US MILITARY FORCE LEVEL IN THEIR COUNTRY, WHICH THEY NOW CONSIDER POLITICALLY UNACCEPTABLE. THAI LEADERS BELIEVE THAT UNLESS SOME PROGRESS IS MADE ON THIS SCORE, THEY WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY VULNERABLE TO PUBLIC CRITICISM THAT COULD LEAD TO LARGE-SCALE STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS.

MORE IMPORTANT, THE THAI LEADERSHIP HOPES ITS DEMARCHE WILL LEAD TO A NEW US MILITARY ASSISTANCE PACKAGE. ALARMED OVER THE DETERIORATING SITUATION IN CAMBODIA AND UNHAPPY OVER RECENT CUTS IN THE LEVEL OF US MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THAILAND, BANGKOK WILL SEE THE US RESPONSE AS A GAUGE OF THE US COMMITMENT TO THAI SECURITY. SHOULD ITS EXPECTATIONS NOT BE MET, BANGKOK MAY CONSIDER NEW STEPS TO SIGNAL ITS DISPLEASURE, SUCH AS A DEMAND FOR A REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF US FACILITIES--INCLUDING THE AIR BASES--PERMITTED TO OPERATE IN THAILAND.

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